

# PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society Presented with the Silver Anvil Award for Grassroots Support of the Freedmen's Bureau Project**

**KING OF PRUSSIA, Pennsylvania** – The Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc. (AAHGS) received the Silver Anvil Award for the society's efforts to support the Freedmen's Bureau Project in 2015 and 2016. Established in 1945 by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the Silver Anvil Awards are recognized as the most prestigious and iconic awards in the communications industry. For 73 years, the Silver Anvil Awards have recognized industry leaders, from solo practitioners to large agencies, small businesses to Fortune 500 companies, and not-for-profits to major government agencies. The Silver Anvil Awards, celebrated as the "Oscars" of the communications industry, recognize the best public relations campaigns of the year and the highest standards of performance for the profession.

The Silver Anvil Award was presented to Baba Gene Stephenson, President of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, at the 39th annual conference by Thom Reed, Deputy Chief Genealogical Officer for FamilySearch International. FamilySearch was the lead sponsor for The Freedmen's Bureau Project which collaborated with AAHGS, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), and the California African American Museum (CAAM).

The Freedmen's Bureau Project was a year-long initiative in which 25,550 volunteers indexed more than 1.5 million digital images from collections of documents from the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands commonly referred to as "The Freedmen's Bureau" which had been archived by the National Archives and Records Administration. The Bureau operated in 15 states and the District of Columbia between 1865 and 1872 to support formerly enslaved Africans, poor white Southerners, and others who found themselves destitute following the United States Civil War. From the efforts of members AAHGS and other partners, 1,781,463 names were added to FamilySearch's database and are now freely searchable online – creating a critical bridge to anyone doing research on their enslaved ancestors.

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The Freedmen's Bureau Project won a Silver Anvil Award from PRSA for Integrated Communications; Associations/Government/Nonprofit Organizations. This category included any program that demonstrated leadership of public relations strategies and tactics in a creative and effective integrated campaign, along with other marketing or communications. The program had to demonstrate the clear leadership of public relations, along with its integration with other disciplines. The project also won an Award of Excellence for public service.